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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-sixth session

Summary record of the 1478th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 17 February 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Leinarte

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of El Salvador

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of El Salvador (CEDAW/C/SLV/8-9; CEDAW/C/SLV/Q/8-9 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of El Salvador took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Castaneda Magaña** (El Salvador), introducing the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of El Salvador (CEDAW/C/SLV/8-9), said that the State party's deep commitment to women's rights was illustrated by the priority given to those rights in the Five-year Development Plan. The national equality plan for 2016-2020, the National Policy for Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence and related legislation also set out the State's responsibility for protecting women's rights and, for the first time, specifically recognized women as rights holders.

3. The entry into force of the Act on Equality, Equity and Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Special Comprehensive Act on a Violence-Free Life for Women had strengthened the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women, which was the lead agency tasked with institutional coordination and strategic management in that area. A bill that would enhance the Institute's role in guiding activities relating to women's rights was being drafted, and the Institute had established the System of Statistics and Monitoring for Equality to monitor institutional progress, the situation of women and compliance with the country's international commitments regarding women's rights.

4. A Gender Statistics Office had been established within the Directorate General of Statistics and Censuses. Measures to combat sexist stereotypes included the dissemination of an analysis of the situation of women, awareness-raising campaigns, training for civil servants, improvements to mechanisms to monitor women's rights in the workplace, cultural events, and technical assistance for the creation of gender equality units and policies within public institutions.

5. The country's literacy programmes had significantly decreased the illiteracy rate among women. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education had adopted a range of measures to promote gender equality, including comprehensive sex education, which had resulted in fewer dropouts and less absenteeism. However, many girls did not attend school because they were required to do household chores or were victims of violence.

6. While the gender quotas introduced by reforms to the Political Parties Act had been effective in the most recent elections to the Legislative Assembly and the Central American Parliament, more progress was needed at the municipal level. The successful Women's City Programme had engendered a related programme aimed at empowering teenage girls and young women and educating them about their rights.

7. Despite progress in the area of employment, women continued to trail far behind men in terms of workforce participation, partly because employment opportunities for them were concentrated in microenterprises. In response, the National Commission on Microenterprises and Small Businesses, the Women's Bank, the Agricultural Development Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock had implemented strategies aimed at providing employment opportunities, access to credit and technical assistance for women.

8. Several projects were aimed at recognizing the ongoing struggles of female survivors of the country's armed conflict, preserving historical memory and preventing the recurrence of conflict. For example, a comprehensive social development programme was in place in El Mozote and the surrounding area, which had been the scene of massacres

during the conflict. Additionally, the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women was recording stories told from the perspective of women survivors. Two national bodies had been established to oversee the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and to increase women's representation in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. A national action plan for the implementation of the resolution was also being drafted.

9. The preparation of the National Plan for Indigenous Peoples had been led by indigenous communities, in particular indigenous women, and would be launched in 2017. The Plan provided for specific actions that would enhance indigenous women's participation in decision-making structures. Several government agencies were currently involved in drafting a national plan for rural and indigenous women, which would address issues such as access to land and water, climate change and food security. In 2016, the Salvadoran Agrarian Reform Institute, in line with its workplan on equality and non-discrimination, had granted land titles to more than 3,000 women, accounting for almost half of the total granted. On more than 5,000 occasions, the National Development Bank of El Salvador had provided funding and technical assistance to women, who participated in particularly high numbers in programmes relating to family farming.

10. Guidelines for bodies working in the area of sexual and reproductive health had been established, and proposed reforms to the Penal Code had been submitted to the Legislative Assembly. Those reforms would decriminalize abortion when the purpose was to preserve the woman's life, when the pregnancy was the result of rape or trafficking, when fetal malformation would make the fetus inviable outside the womb or when the pregnancy was the result of rape or statutory rape of a minor. The Legislative Assembly was also due to decide on the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

11. Maternal mortality had fallen by more than 60 per cent over the previous 12 years, and the current rate was one of the lowest in the region. More women had access to contraception thanks to partnerships with NGOs and other institutions. Almost all births now took place in hospitals, and almost two thirds of pregnant women received care in early pregnancy; of those, all received dental care and two thirds received a check-up within seven days of giving birth. Women who were at high reproductive risk were identified by hospitals and specialized Community Family Health Centres to enable them to take a free and informed decision on whether to become pregnant.

12. Infant mortality and premature births had decreased, obstetric specialists were on duty 24 hours a day in most maternity units, and ultrasound equipment was available in all emergency units. Hospitals also housed clinics that provided confidential services for women victims of violence. Efforts had been made to reduce violence through the promotion of non-violent lifestyles, care for victims of violence against women, psychosocial rehabilitation and guidelines for inter-agency and intersectoral coordination. As President pro tempore of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, El Salvador sought to raise the profile of gender equality and women's empowerment and to eradicate violence against women at the regional level. The current year would see the opening of specialized courts to address violence and discrimination against women.

13. Reducing the country's high rates of pregnancy among minors remained a significant challenge. To that end, and aware that early pregnancy represented a violation of girls' rights and a significant threat to their health, the Government had implemented a national strategy involving education for adolescents and their parents; group support for pregnant adolescents; promotion of sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents through a range of media; preventive care; specialized care for adolescents at Community Family Health Centres and hospitals; adolescent-friendly health services; partnerships between government agencies and NGOs; and development of a national multisectoral strategy.

14. El Salvador would continue to address the main challenges that it faced in relation to women's rights, in particular by boosting regulations to eradicate practices and stereotypes that led to discrimination, inequality and violence against women, and by improving women's access to justice and health care.

Articles 1 to 6

15. **Ms. Schulz** said that she wished to know how the obstacles hindering the ratification of the Optional Protocol would be overcome and whether there was a time frame for ratification. Noting the country's extraordinarily harsh anti-abortion legislation, which in practice applied only to disadvantaged women and girls, she asked whether the Government was willing to legalize abortion at least when the woman's or girl's health or life was threatened and in cases of rape, incest and severe fetal impairment, and to decriminalize it in all circumstances, and whether there was a time frame for discussion of such reforms. She wished to know whether the Government was willing to apply a moratorium on the enforcement of the law; to allow women accused of abortion-related offences to await trial outside prison; to expedite the review of the cases of all women currently imprisoned for abortion-related offences, with a view to securing their release; to restore full confidentiality between doctors and patients by immediately ending the practice of requiring health personnel to report cases of abortion to law enforcement; and to ensure the quality of all pregnancy-related health services, including post-abortion care.

16. She also wished to know whether cases of harassment, intimidation, abuse and murder of women's human rights defenders were investigated to bring the perpetrators to justice and grant reparation to victims. She asked whether recently enacted legislation on access to justice and the training of judicial and law enforcement officers would improve the justice system; whether the system addressed cases of multiple discrimination against women, while considering the interaction of the various grounds of discrimination; and whether women could lodge complaints of discrimination on various grounds with the same court. Lastly, she asked whether the Act on Equality, Equity and Elimination of Discrimination against Women created new rights that could be invoked in court, whether it required enabling legislation and whether the control mechanism provided for by the Act was already in place.

17. **Ms. Peña Mendoza** (El Salvador) said that, while the bill on the partial decriminalization of abortion had not yet garnered the necessary support in the Legislative Assembly, attempts to defeat it definitively had failed. The supposed conflict between the rights of the unborn and the rights of women also stood in the way of the bill's adoption, and the Supreme Court of Justice had ordered the Legislative Assembly to resolve the issue. Only the Supreme Court of Justice could grant pardons to women convicted of abortion-related offences; such rulings were not made in the majority of cases and only one woman had been released from prison after receiving a pardon.

18. **Ms. Argueta Martínez** (El Salvador) said that the Act on Equality, Equity and Elimination of Discrimination against Women was implemented through the National System for Substantive Equality, whose provisions included new specialized courts to deal with gender-based violence and a range of forms of discrimination. Training and awareness-raising had been carried out as part of the establishment of those courts, and the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women had validated the appointment of their judges. Regarding women's rights defenders, the Government worked with civil society through advisory councils and a national network of women's rights defenders to protect such activists, and a report on how the Attorney General's Office could protect and provide justice for them would soon be published. Steps were being taken to remedy the failure to recognize the specific rights of women's rights defenders at the legal level.

19. **Mr. Robles Ticas** (El Salvador) said that health-care professionals were trained to prioritize the provision of health care over the filing of reports with the relevant authorities.

20. **Ms. Schulz** asked whether the bill on the partial decriminalization of abortion took women's right to health into consideration and whether the State party had considered revising article 1 (2) of its Constitution in order to resolve the problems created by the recognition of embryos as human beings. She would welcome clarification on whether or not doctors reported women who had undergone abortions or suffered miscarriages to the authorities. She wished to know what effect the Supreme Court's unconstitutionality ruling on the 1993 Amnesty Act had had and whether it offered new hope for women who had suffered sexual and gender-based violence during the conflict.

21. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** asked what obstacles were hindering the ratification of the Optional Protocol and whether it would be ratified in the near future.

22. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** asked how the Government was working with different stakeholders in the debate on the partial decriminalization of abortion. The situation was difficult because the State's duty to protect women clashed with the Constitution's recognition of the unborn as persons.

23. **Ms. Peña Mendoza** (El Salvador) said that the bill provided for the decriminalization of abortion only when a woman's life, not just her health, was at risk. The main obstacle to the adoption of the bill and to the ratification of the Optional Protocol was the extremely conservative stance of some parliamentarians. In order to overcome that obstacle, work had been done with women's organizations, churches and doctors' associations. The Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court of Justice had ruled that it was not necessary to amend the Constitution in order to reform the Penal Code.

24. **Ms. Argueta Martínez** (El Salvador) said that the project to preserve the historical memory of women survivors of the El Mozote massacre included an emotional support component that could be extended to survivors of other massacres. A group for building peace, security and justice that comprised more than 2,000 female combatants had also been established to create a framework for women's rights within peacebuilding processes.

25. **Mr. Robles Ticas** (El Salvador) said that the health system prioritized the provision of care in order to safeguard women's lives and health. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare was required to advise the authorities of circumstances that required investigation, such as cases involving pregnant minors. Health-care staff received training on patient-doctor confidentiality.

26. **Ms. Schulz** asked whether the Constitution provided for the separation of church and State. Other States parties that had decriminalized abortion only when a woman's life was at risk had encountered difficulty in defining such circumstances, with medical staff often avoiding abortion for fear of prosecution or allowing women's health to degrade before they undertook the procedure.

27. **Ms. Peña Mendoza** (El Salvador) said that the State was secular, as emphasized by the Constitution and the Special Comprehensive Act on a Violence-Free Life for Women. Nevertheless, there existed a group of extremely conservative lawmakers in the Legislative Assembly, and the new Human Rights Ombudsperson opposed the decriminalization of abortion. It was hoped that enough support could be mustered from the various right-wing opposition parties to pass the bill. No time frame had been set for the bill's adoption in order to prevent its opponents from mounting a counter-campaign.

28. **Ms. Haidar** asked how the State party planned to strengthen the capacities of the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women, given that its budget was minimal; how the representatives of the national women's organizations that sat on the Institute's governing board were selected; and how the implementation of the agreement signed with

the Prudencia Ayala Feminist Coordinating Committee was monitored and evaluated. She would welcome information on the Institute's data-collection system, particularly in relation to data on women victims of violence. Lastly, in the light of the State party's selection for accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, she wished to know how the Institute monitored the Goals' implementation and the mainstreaming of gender into that process, and whether NGOs were involved in the monitoring.

29. **Ms. Chalal** asked whether training was provided on the direct applicability of article 4 (1) of the Convention and on the importance of temporary special measures in accelerating gender equality. Given the Committee's concerns that temporary special measures were underutilized as a strategy to achieve gender equality in fields where women were underrepresented, she asked what additional measures were planned, whether the measures already in place were monitored and evaluated and with what objectives, how the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women contributed to those measures, what resources were allocated for their implementation, what measures were planned to address the unequal representation of men and women in decision-making posts in the public and private sectors and what efforts had been undertaken to raise awareness of the right to equal opportunities in the workplace.

30. **Ms. Argueta Martínez** (El Salvador) said that representatives of women's organizations were elected to the governing board of the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women through a public call for applications, followed by an election in which all organizations represented on the Institute's board were eligible to vote. The process was monitored by the Counsel General's Office, the Office of the Human Rights Advocate and the Director of the Institute.

31. The Institute also worked with the Gender Statistics Unit within the Directorate General of Statistics and Censuses and was currently finalizing a time-use survey with the aim of detecting the amount of unpaid work carried out by women and the conditions in which it was performed. It was also drafting a list of indicators to measure the progress of the National Plan for Equality and Equity for Salvadoran Women and the National Policy for Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence, which were also monitored by other groups. A survey on the perception of violence against women was being carried out; data on that issue were also being gathered by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. The Institute produced an annual report on violence against women, and a statistical yearbook on the situation of women was due to be published the following month. Efforts were being made to harmonize data collection across different government bodies.

32. Reforms to strengthen the Institute both economically and politically were ongoing. Furthermore, other equality mechanisms such as the Special Technical Commission were now regulated by legislation. The Institute had achieved progress in the area of employment by establishing job banks for women and by providing them with training and non-traditional employment opportunities. A pilot programme that provided funding to female victims of violence and that monitored their subsequent progress would later be extended to female victims of a range of crimes. Specific job banks for victims of violence and for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community had been created. There had been a dramatic increase in the number of facilities providing care for victims of violence, which were located in areas where violence against women was most prevalent, and municipal authorities had been given responsibility for promoting the rights of women at the local level.

33. **Ms. Fernández** (El Salvador) said that the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women was part of the team of agencies that monitored progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the mainstreaming of gender in that process. Special temporary measures were in place under the National Equality Plan to close persistent equality gaps with regard to economic independence, education and health.

34. **Ms. Haidar** asked the delegation to specify the level of executive authority of the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women.

35. **Ms. Argueta Martínez** (El Salvador) said that a bill had been drafted for the reform of the Institute. Under current legislation, it served not only as a coordinator but also as a lead agency. A permanent coordination mechanism was in place for liaison with women parliamentarians on all reform processes. The Institute worked with the Ministry of Finance to ensure gender-sensitive budgeting, and the Court of Audit played a supervisory role to ensure the proper use of funds for strengthening the structures in place to promote non-discrimination.

36. **Ms. Fernández** (El Salvador) added that the Institute was independent and formed part of the Social Affairs Cabinet and the Security Cabinet, and as such could participate fully in the executive direction of public policy.

37. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** asked whether the Institute had ministerial status.

38. **Ms. Argueta Martínez** (El Salvador) said that the Institute and the women's movement in El Salvador had agreed that if the Institute became a ministry for women's affairs, it would run the risk of being subsumed into the Government and losing its visibility and specific authority. A better approach would be to strengthen the Institute and equip it with a specific mandate and the necessary tools to respond effectively to women's issues through representation in the executive branch, the Legislative Assembly and the Supreme Court of Justice.

39. **Ms. Peña Mendoza** (El Salvador) said that close cooperation between the Institute and the women's movement in El Salvador was particularly important and must not be lost. The Institute had been established by law, and thus could not be abolished as easily as a ministry.

40. **Ms. Rana** said that she wished to know why so few femicide cases were prosecuted and why reparation for the families of victims was so rarely granted. She also asked what was being done to overcome obstacles to access to justice. With regard to sexual violence, most victims were adolescent girls. She asked what was being done to reduce the high numbers of adolescents who became pregnant and dropped out of school, and enquired as to the status of the proposed revision to the Family Code to bring the minimum age of marriage into line with the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

41. The Committee was particularly concerned about the problem of rape, abduction and murder of girls in neighbourhoods under gang control. The Committee had been informed that the deployment of security forces to gang-controlled areas had increased the incidence of violence against women. Girls who became pregnant as a result of rape or sexual abuse were likely to seek abortions and thus were at risk of being punished under criminal law. What was being done to protect women and girls in that regard?

42. She asked whether prison law reforms had helped to prevent situations in which women and adolescent girls were forced to have sex with prisoners. The enforcement of anti-violence legislation was suffering because of budget constraints; did the Government plan to conduct a budget assessment with a view to ensuring the proper implementation of that legislation and the allocation of adequate resources for the protection of women and girls against violence?

43. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** asked how many women and girls were trafficked in El Salvador for sexual exploitation, how many were forced into slavery, servitude and begging, and how many became pregnant as a result of sexual exploitation and abuse. She also asked what was being done to ensure systematic data collection and what measures were being taken to bring traffickers to justice. According to the information before the Committee, very few trafficking investigations had resulted in a trial or a conviction. What steps were

being taken to ensure that victims of violence were able to bring the perpetrators to justice? She wished to know what was being done to prevent women who were deported from the United States of America and Mexico from falling into the hands of organized crime networks, and whether the number of shelters for trafficking victims would be increased.

44. With regard to sex work, she expressed concern at the lack of measures to protect sex workers. Women who worked as independent sex workers tended to suffer severe discrimination in hospitals and health-care settings, and often suffered abuse and violence at the hands of the authorities. She asked what was being done to rectify that situation.

45. **Ms. Argueta Martínez** (El Salvador) said that rates of femicide and violence against women were indeed particularly high in El Salvador. Given the lack of a unified data registry, comprehensive data on violence against women were difficult to obtain, and multiple sources of information could result in duplications. A permanent body had been set up to assess the geographic distribution of violence against women and girls and to investigate its root causes. Impunity in cases of femicide resulted from a failure to interpret the law correctly and to identify perpetrators; if the perpetrator was a gang member, for example, the crime might be identified as gang violence rather than femicide. Some 80 specialized units had been set up to address violence against women at three levels: reporting, access to justice and restitution of victims' rights. A more comprehensive network of care for victims was also being developed. Although shelters were in place to protect victims of violence during court proceedings, victims were often reluctant to move into them; other means of providing protection must therefore be considered.

46. A reform of the Criminal Code was under way to ensure that not only traffickers but also their customers were held to account. The conviction of some of the most high-profile members of Salvadoran society in trafficking cases had raised public awareness of the problem and could make victims more inclined to report abuses. With regard to migrant women, a protocol for women in transit, returnees and trafficking victims was being prepared with a view to raising awareness, and a national plan of action would be developed to provide victims with restitution and support for their reintegration into society.

47. **Mr. Castaneda Magaña** (El Salvador) said that the Safe El Salvador Plan was an intersectoral framework to improve public security. A national public safety council had been established to bring together public, private, religious and civil-society institutions to increase public safety at the local level through simple measures such as improved street lighting, which had resulted in a substantial reduction in homicide rates. Efforts had also been made to promote productivity, particularly among women prisoners who had been allocated land to cultivate as a means of promoting their reintegration into society and increasing respect for their human rights. High-level coordination on security matters was being conducted with neighbouring countries to address organized crime and violence.

48. **Ms. Fernández** (El Salvador) said that budgetary resources were allocated by sector. A budget reform was under way and all State institutions would be required to provide clear reports on their spending.

49. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** asked whether discrimination against sex workers was common in hospitals and health-care centres and by the police.

50. **Ms. Rana** reiterated her request for information on the status of the proposed reform of the Family Code to bring the minimum age of marriage into line with the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

51. **Mr. Robles Ticas** (El Salvador) said that concerted efforts were being made to prevent discrimination against sex workers, especially in hospitals. Efforts to achieve universal health-care coverage had included increased investments in gynaecological services and diagnostic equipment.

52. **Ms. Peña Mendoza** (El Salvador) said that funding for programmes and activities to meet the Sustainable Development Goals was problematic. A simple redistribution of available resources would not be sufficient; an increase in funds would be essential. Meeting the large number of targets and indicators under the Goals was particularly challenging in a country where the distribution of wealth was highly unequal.

53. National law continued to provide that girls and boys under the age of 18 could marry with the consent of their parents. A reform of that provision would be put forward later in 2017.

54. The Safe El Salvador Plan included measures that went beyond law enforcement to ensure protection and care for victims of violence. While efforts were being made to end stereotyping, any such cultural change was a slow process. She had requested a meeting with the Human Rights Ombudsperson to discuss gender-based violence, but had been refused and would therefore appreciate the Committee's support in calling for such a meeting.

55. **Ms. Argueta Martínez** (El Salvador) said that the police and civil servants needed a change of attitude with regard to sex workers. Efforts were being made to gather data on discrimination against sex workers in health-care settings and at the hands of law enforcement officers. With regard to child marriages, pending a reform of the law, efforts were being made to encourage officials to refuse to perform weddings involving children. In two municipalities, draft municipal laws prohibiting child marriage had been proposed.

56. **Mr. Castaneda Magaña** (El Salvador) emphasized that there was no State policy of persecuting sex workers.

Articles 7 to 9

57. **Ms. Chalal** said that she was concerned about the underrepresentation of women in public administration in the State party. She wished to know what obstacles prevented women from participating in politics and public life, and what specific steps were being taken to encourage women to embrace a political career and apply for high-level posts. She wondered what role the media were playing in advocating change. She asked whether measures were being taken to help women understand how important it was for them to be involved in decision-making and policymaking that affected them. While quotas for women's representation in the executive, legislative and judicial branches were useful, she would welcome more information about how they would be put into practice.

58. **Ms. Manalo** said that she wished to know how many women had joined the diplomatic service, how many were career diplomats and how many had been appointed as ambassadors. She also wished to know how many Salvadoran women worked in intergovernmental organizations at the regional and international levels, and what measures were being taken to encourage women to seek positions in the international arena.

59. **Ms. Argueta Martínez** (El Salvador) said that the underrepresentation of women in public life in El Salvador reflected the realities of Salvadoran society. Women who cared for family members were often precluded from participation in public life; a national care policy was therefore being developed to enable women to participate in politics. Awareness-raising campaigns were being waged to encourage women's participation, and the Secretariat for Social Inclusion was promoting training and literacy programmes to ensure that women were not only aware of their rights but also able to exercise them. Measures were being taken to prevent violence against women in politics and the use of stereotypes in political campaigns. As women tended to have more difficulty than men in obtaining campaign funds, greater investment in women candidates was being sought.

60. **Ms. Peña Mendoza** (El Salvador) said that a bill addressing equality in democracy was currently before the Legislative Assembly. Further efforts were required to increase women's participation in other aspects of public life; the media tended not to interview women, but any effort to encourage an increase in media representation of women could be construed as an attempt to restrict freedom of expression. Despite the existence of quotas for women's participation in politics, the number of women in political posts remained low. While women's representation must be increased, political and social change would not necessarily be directly linked to that increase, as women would not necessarily agree on certain issues. Many women were against the decriminalization of abortion, for example.

61. **Mr. Castaneda Magaña** (El Salvador) said that efforts were being made to offer women real opportunities to participate in public life. An institute for diplomatic studies had been established to train career diplomats. El Salvador had appointed women to the diplomatic service in its embassies and in its Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva and Rome.

62. **Ms. Chalal** asked whether quotas had been set for the participation of indigenous women in public life.

63. **Ms. Alvanes Amaya** (El Salvador) said that a national action plan for indigenous peoples was currently under discussion. Indigenous women tended to face multiple forms of discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, gender and poverty. The Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women was playing an active role in addressing indigenous women's issues, and it was hoped that indigenous women would eventually take up posts in the public sector. Progress had been made, including the amendment of legislation to allow for the transfer of land to indigenous women, but considerable challenges persisted.

64. **Ms. Peña Mendoza** (El Salvador) added that the constitutional reform whereby indigenous peoples had been officially recognized had been a slow process. The recent adoption of legislation on culture, which recognized indigenous peoples' rights to traditions, customs and freedom of belief, had been a positive development. Even so, much remained to be done and the process of guaranteeing the rights of indigenous peoples was only just beginning. The recognition of those peoples in the Constitution meant that they would begin to receive due consideration in national policies and programmes.

65. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** asked whether the State party recognized its Afrodescendent population, since there was a long-standing myth that no such people existed in El Salvador.

66. **Ms. Alvanes Amaya** (El Salvador) said that a small Afrodescendent population had been identified and a section of the forthcoming action plan on minorities would be devoted to the issues facing that community. A census was planned to survey the origins of the various ethnic groups in El Salvador. The situation of Afrodescendants in El Salvador had long been ignored and the Government was making every effort to gather information on those communities and their living situations.

Articles 10 to 14

67. **Ms. Manalo** asked what was being done to mainstream gender in education from the primary level onward. She asked whether equality education was included in the national school curriculum, whether girls were educated for leadership roles, and whether sexuality education was provided. She also wondered whether teachers were trained in gender equality and requested information on how the curriculum and teaching materials had been adapted.

68. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that while the initiatives taken to diversify women's training and employment were welcome, the Committee remained concerned that women

were employed primarily in low-paid jobs and that a significant gender pay gap persisted. She wished to know what was being done to rectify those issues and to ensure equal pay for work of equal value. She requested updated information on the recognition of domestic work and the protection of domestic workers, particularly the performance of labour inspections for domestic work. She wished to know which violations of domestic workers' rights occurred most frequently and what the main obstacles were to the ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). She asked whether the maquila industry, which was notorious for its poor working conditions, was subject to labour inspections and, if so, whether such inspections were conducted as a matter of course or only when complaints had been received. She also asked what was being done to hold companies that exploited Salvadoran women to account, particularly since many of those companies were multinationals.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.